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## PRESS RELEASE

### U.S. DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION OPENS FAMILY MEDICINE CENTER IN PANJAKENT

On November 4, Necia Quast, Deputy Chief of the U.S. Mission, Panjakent Mayor Khisrav Abdunazarov, Deputy Minister of Health Sohib Rahmonov and representatives of the Sughd Oblast Health Department opened the third Family Medicine Center of Excellence (CoE) in Panjakent, Sughd Oblast, to provide modern, expert medical care to oblast residents. The CoE was collaboration between the Ministry of Health, the United States Agency for International Development ZdravPlus Project, the Sughd Oblast Health Department and the Panjakent Hukumat.

Strengthening primary health care (PHC) and introducing family medicine services are priorities supported by the National Health Reform Concept and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. Access to PHC services promotes disease prevention by encouraging early detection of diseases and reduces hospitalization rates through effective management of chronic conditions. Treatment of medical conditions at the PHC level also reduces the need for referrals to expensive specialists, saving valuable health sector resources and reducing the cost of medical services for families.

This Family Medicine Center of Excellence is an important first step toward promoting the many benefits of primary health care in Panjakent as well in the whole Zarafshon valley. Established as part of the City Health Center, the CoE will offer the community a package of quality medical services.

The CoE will also be used as a base for continuing medical education of the health workers and family medicine training. The availability of highly qualified family doctors is critical to the successful introduction of family medicine in Tajikistan. The Ministry of Health recognizes that expansion of PHC services across the country will require 4,000 family medicine specialists. This CoE will play an important role in reaching this goal. In October 2008, the first family medicine training program started in this CoE.

The USAID ZdravPlus project is one of the many assistance projects implemented in Tajikistan by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on behalf of the American people. Since 1993 the American people through USAID have provided about \$300 million in assistance programs that support economic growth, democratic institutions, health care, and education systems of Tajikistan.